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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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TECHNOLOGY CENTER B3700

Applicant(s): KATO, et al.

Serial No.: 09/725,257

Filed: November 29, 2000

For: VACUUM PROCESSING APPARATUS AND OPERATING METHOD THEREFOR

SUPPLEMENTAL PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

May 29, 2001

Sir:

Prior to examination of the above-identified application, and supplementing the Preliminary Amendment filed November 29, 2000, please amend the above-identified application as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claim 1 without prejudice or disclaimer, and add the following new claims to the application:

--2. Sample processing apparatus, comprising:

a cassette table exposed to a cassette-transferring atmosphere, for mounting a cassette to store plural samples,

an atmospheric transferring device, for transferring a sample in said cassette in an atmospheric condition, said cassette being mounted on said cassette table;

a locking mechanism for changing over from the atmospheric condition to a reduced pressure condition as compared to the atmospheric condition, or changing over the

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90.00 OP
01 FC:102
02 FC:103